

profligacy of the rich. The government and society of a country must be terrible, indeed, where the purity and loveliness of woman's character will not find some retired places in which to grow. Her dress, actions, language and general appearance were quite those of a lady; and it required the observation of but a very few hours to congratulate ourselves on so prepossessing a companion. She had evidently been reared in the bosom of a refined and affectionate family, and had a pleasing shyness, from which a sensible and very good-natured character broke out by degrees. The awkwardness of a first meeting soon disappeared, and vetturini to the Eternal City have rarely had four more contented and good-humoured travellers to drive and to cheat. Sometimes she repeated choice *morceaux* of Italian poetry, with admirable French and English versions; and, sometimes, hummed over, with a slight blush, portions of her favourite operas in a musical, but low and timid voice. The intention of a modest and pure nature unconsciously graduated her manner to that tone between reserve too cool, or confidence too careless, which a prude can never hope to hit. The ease of an artless soul, which beholds the world without shrinking; not from fearlessness of its vices, but ignorance of them. She cherished for her unhappy country, even for the fallen city of her birth, a reverential love, and defended its vices and follies with a charming eloquence, and with that lingering fidelity which enters so largely into the female character, and which makes a wife or a mother cherish, with an increasing ardour, the worthless husband or the profligate son, whom the world have rejected. We shall always think better of Italy for her sake, and charitably believe, that the traveller beholds it in its darkest aspect.

The baron, with the frankness, appeared governed by the simplicity, of a child, and disclosed a character as amiable as it was amusing; and, which, while it exhibited the unchecked weaknesses of inexperience and education, discovered that the original powers of a manly and sensible mind would one day weed the soil, and subject it to new and more judicious cultivation. He was a handsome fellow withal, about the middling height, with regular, manly, and highly expressive features—black hair and eyes—a hand and foot, which he thought well of—a perfect set of white teeth, and a smile that made you his friend at once. I can forgive anything to a good smile. But the favourite claim of his face, in his own estimation, to the respect of chance-companions, was the pair of shining curls upon his lip. At our stopping-places, he invariably spent a minute before the glass, renewing their shape and raven hue, with a small, coloured brush. He depended upon them more than on his merit; and he, sometimes, looked up into my face in the ardour of a debate, with a countenance so lighted with expression, that I often caught myself admiring him, mustaches and all, with the eye of an artist. By the way, a traveller unlearns, as well as learns much. In the progress of his journey he drops, by the road-side, opinion after opinion, and prejudice after prejudice; and, indeed, should be careful that his old friendships and principles do not slip away also from his loosened hold. A pair of mustaches, in New-York, threw me into a rage. My heart hardened with the bigotry of a smooth lip, and I regretted that, in the task of extermination, the spirit of the age confined me to the bloodless weapons of example and satire. I felt the last spark of my fanaticism go out, one day, in Florence, before a stern portrait by Titian. Sir, it was magnificent!

Mustaches, like costume, depend on the custom of the country, and require to be judged with an allowance; they become ridiculous only when assumed, where they are a singularity, from a conceit of imitation, or the ambition of eccentricity, as if a New-York *beau* should wear a turban. In me they would have been unpatriotic, and, therefore, wicked and absurd. In the baron, they were natural, and his partiality was excusable.

Nothing could exceed the kind, and even courtly etiquette, which reigned in our little party. *La signora* carefully furnished us with all the interesting facts concerning our route, within her recollection; and the baron would not open his guide-book without a bow to the ladies, and a "*Pardon, madame!*" Then we had our separate hours for French, English and Italian; and ingenious penalties for delinquents in their vernacular; though, in truth, as our narratives, anecdotes, interrogations and descriptions grew more animated, the trammels of colloquial restraint were overlapped without ceremony; and you would have smiled to hear the eager baron, after pausing and struggling impatiently among the paradoxes of the English, break loose, like a river sweeping away its dam, and dashing on his course in French.

Gradually growing better acquainted, the casual topics of the road—an ancient town, a broken tower, or a lofty convent—gave place to others of a more familiar nature. If the baron had not always thought correctly, he had reflected much, and launched boldly upon the ocean of literature, music, history and politics, with passing glances at philosophy and metaphysics. Italy, France, Spain and England were discussed by us, with the eagerness of those who have either just seen or are just going to see them. Respecting America, though regarding a visit to it as you would the idea of a voyage to Patagonia or the Cape of Good Hope, he discovered the strongest curiosity. By and by, I found myself the depository of several confidential secrets; and, what with the rides, which we often had, of some hours before breakfast, and one long walk up the mountains of Radicofani, Aquapendente and Viterbo, I was soon sufficiently enlightened to compile a tolerable biography. I was amused with his bright and cheerful views of life, and his grand plans for the future, which he unfolded without the least reserve, and with an unconscious dash of self-complacency, which rather excited my envy than my censure. His tour was to embrace a period of several years, and to comprise pretty much every people in the world, with whose manners, laws and languages he was to become acquainted. One year, or, perhaps, two, of that time, were to be

devoted to study, in some yet undetermined university, where history, the ancient languages, fencing, Italian and English were to occupy his hours. From his experience, he was to compose a book of travels, which was to consummate his own fame, and form an era in the literature of Belgium. At this task, he was already laboriously employed; noting, with a desperate perseverance, (and the occasional danger of being left behind,) every point of information afforded by the road, the vetturino, or our own casual conversation; and I have the honour of supplying an elaborate history of America, elicited from me by the Socratic method of interrogation. In the morning, before starting, while I was taking my coffee, by candlelight, he was generally found, after begging pardon for the liberty, sitting, with his little diary on his knee, wrapped in thought with a frown upon his brow, prolific of future octavoës, and the tip of his pencil pressed against his forehead, dragging up from his memory some fugitive fact, or moulding some obstinate sentence into a rhetorical flourish. It is not impossible that he may accomplish his design of instructing the world and himself, and turn out, hereafter, a Humboldt, or a Davy; but I have detected symptoms in him which make me fear that he will meet many dangerous obstacles where he least apprehends opposition; and that the task of erasure, under a more matured judgment, will leave fearful chasms in his work.

Such a nature, without the tenderest of passions, would be an anomaly. He has already loved; and, with a most earnest gravity, favoured us with an animated account of his sufferings and adventures in broken English. He had conceived a most romantic attachment for a young girl—an angel of course; and, though but slightly acquainted with her, his passion extended beyond all bounds of reason, and she must either be the baroness—or he must escape from his pangs in "the high Roman fashion." Distracted with love and jealousy, for she smiled, it seems, upon others, he had challenged a poor fellow, guilty of attending her to some ball, and was prepared to call out all who addressed her, with the resolution to defend the precious fruit or to die in the attempt. As there were many military quartered in the town, he was likely to have some occupation for his leisure hours, and he related the incident very seriously, with no idea of its droll absurdity, and not without a secret willingness to awaken our sympathy and admiration.

"But," said I, rather abruptly, "how did the young lady relish your interference?"

He requested me to explain.

"Why, it appears to me," continued I, "that your exertions must have been either fruitless or unnecessary. If you admired her, and had secured her favour, so far from killing a man for preferring her, you must rather feel that his taste was natural. Instead of shooting him, I should only sympathize with him."

"Ay, but," replied the baron, a little staggered with this new view of the subject, "I was not certain that she loved me."

"Still," added I, with a respectful air of inquiry rather than of comment, "I do not quite perceive how that alters the question. On the contrary, to my comprehension it involves it in new difficulties. Had the lady openly acknowledged you the object of her devotion, you might then, perhaps, demand an explanation of other admirers, but without this understanding—"

"Why," interrupted the baron, "I loved her passionately. We could not all marry her, and I am not aware of any other way to arrange those matters among gentlemen."

"But," said I, for I perceived by the quiet smiles of the rest of my auditory, that they sympathized with the baron's distress in his argument, more deeply than in his passion, "what if the lady had loved another? He, upon whom a young girl bestows her free affection, cannot be wrong in receiving it. Should you deprive him of life, besides the moral criminality of the deed, instead of acquiring her love, you would only excite her indignation and abhorrence."

He paused a moment, evidently reflecting upon the adventure for the first time. At length, with a somewhat stern look, he asked me,

"And pray, sir, do you think, if I had killed any of those gentlemen, that I should have committed a crime?"

This interrogation from one who had thought of challenging a whole army for admiring the same young lady with himself, required a cautious reply. I escaped, however, under the disguise of a metaphysical distinction, and the cloud passed away. He confessed, indeed, that the affair had been rather silly than heroic, but he had been a "mere boy." "Now, that he was a 'man,'" (he curled his mustache with his finger,) he would endeavour to bestow his affection "where there was more probability of a return."

The large, soft eyes of the senora were lifted to his as he said this, and I fancied that his own lent a certain meaning to the sentence. It was very natural for this lovely and impassioned young Italian woman—her heart full of idle tenderness, to admire the handsome and accomplished baron, so full of gentleness and courage, so full of youthful fervour and susceptibility. But while he seemed yielding without consciousness to the insensible encroachments of a pleasing friendship, she appeared to know that his preference was transient and unmeaning, however agreeable; that he was destined for some happier love; that he was of a sanguine, and perhaps inconstant temperament, with whom in her girlhood she might have fallen in love, and whom now she should deem a dangerous companion to a younger sister. It had struck me more than once in the course of our journey, that they were two young beings of much more personal grace and beauty, than forethought and experience, and that the innumerable incidents during our slow progress over this lovely and interesting country, our loiterings about highways, old towns, and dimly lighted cathedrals, our delays on the road, our troubles at each *dogana*, our stoppings and our startings, the petty circumstances of each grotesque old *albergo* or inn, all furnished topics of good-natured and familiar conversation and comment, calculated to unfold the engaging character of each to

ORIGINAL LETTERS FROM ITALY.

THE MINUTE-BOOK:

A SERIES OF FAMILIAR LETTERS FROM ABROAD.

TRAVELLING COMPANIONS.

On my journey to Rome, I was much amused with the society of two fellow-travellers, who occupied, with us, the voiture from Florence—a Roman lady, and a baron from Belgium. More agreeable chance-companions it has rarely been our lot to enjoy; and, none of us being much stricken with years or wisdom, the whole ride, a period of six days, rolled right merrily away, beguiled by the liveliest conversation, in which the occasional dulness of sense was relieved by a thousand sportive sallies and humorous incidents. They both spoke English a little—the lady, with a blush and a hesitation, that added to the grace of her errors, and immediately interested you in her favour; and the baron, with a good-humoured recklessness of case and gender, which, if it broke the head of Priscian, might have also shaken his sides with laughter. No sooner had the turrets of the Palazzo Ferroni begun to retreat behind us, and while the heavily-booted vetturino was cracking his whip with emphasis upon the *Ponte Santa Trinita*, than the colloquial propensities of the baron began to unfold themselves; and, from his "Like you Florence, madam?" "Sir?" "If you like Florence?" till our warm and hearty farewell in the Vatican, not a moment of the way was abandoned to ennui.

Good health and spirits, the objects of a picturesque and interesting road, and the confinement of a carriage, soon brought us more familiarly acquainted. It appeared that the lady was a widow, without a family and with a tolerable fortune, and returning from her summer excursion to Florence and Lucca. She was pretty, with a clear complexion and very expressive eyes, and just verging into the occasional thoughtfulness of twenty-five. A better specimen could not be offered of that portion of the Italians, who dwell in peace, between the degradation of the poor, and the pomp and

the other, to excite and perhaps soften the heart, and prepare it for those impressions that only age or coldness disregards. Then those hills, and our long and exhilarating walks to their summits! The world at large are hardened against sentiment, hackneyed in evil, and sadly incredulous of purity and truth in the character of their fellow beings, but who ever looks with candour about him, will often meet individuals who neither entertain nor deserve such harsh construction. The more I observed of our two agreeable friends, the more my instinctive conviction was confirmed of their childish innocence and genuine goodness. I could detect each day an increasing softness in the manner of the senora, and a more undisguised tenderness in that of the baron, yet neither sought solitude; up the steep ascents they still walked with us; our evenings were spent in a general circle, and an instinctive sense of propriety, which often supplies the lessons of experience and reflection, kept them always in the presence of a third person. Their parting would be thus shaded only with that pensive regret which such amiable travellers must often feel and inspire. A half hour together alone, might have deepened the senora's preference into a passion, and the baron would have had a Roman army to overcome. The senora was well acquainted with the Italian literature, and as the baron had acquired in Florence a tolerable knowledge of the language, some opportune sentiments were discovered, perhaps accidentally, for the occasion. He listened with the ardour of an impassioned, added to "the triumphs of a lettered heart," and if I do not mistake, there are some passages of Petrarch which he will never recall without a pleasant memory of his engaging companion in the Roman *vulture*.

He sometimes, however, forgot both philosophy and love, in rage at the scoundrel landlords, who watch incautious travellers with the rapaciousness of vampires; and a fellow who had shown him one night up into a wretched garret-hole for a bed-room, received all the force of his new Italian in a shower of indignation. "I will have you to know, sir," he said, "that is no room for a baron."

But the most amusing trait in his character, was his unlimited appreciation of every thing marked in the guide book with notes of admiration, or presented to his notice with the recommendation of an immortal name. This was not affected. So fervent was his reverence for the fine arts, and so implicit his reliance on the opinion of the world, that he fully believed himself delighted with what had delighted others; his approbation was without limit.

By the way, here is a question which a traveller must consider. In viewing the works of art which crowd the galleries of Europe, must he frankly acknowledge their pleasurable effects upon him according to his real impressions, or must he waive all right to judge or to feel for himself, and regard the merits of every object as already settled and defined beyond dispute? In either case he will expose himself to an imputation of slavish affectation or of presumptuous ignorance and bad taste. The excellence of the great masterpieces of painting and sculpture, however, are not more acknowledged among the candid and sensible, than the fact that they do not always please, even artists, at first sight. And although it may appear a paradox, yet I could never help regarding the uniform and vehement admiration expressed by many unpractised tourists for every thing that was celebrated, and their excessive indifference for whatever wanted a name, as a tolerable evidence that they knew and felt nothing of their beauty. Perfection in sculpture and painting consists mainly in the art of mixing colours, or in the fidelity with which the joints and sinews, the minor peculiarities and proportions of the human frame are copied in the marble or on the canvass. And of these a painter, a surgeon, or a tailor is the best judge. Self-complacency may have suggested this theory as a cover for my own want of taste, as I must confess that many and many a time I have stood coldly before a *chef d'œuvre*, whose conspicuous shrine gathered pilgrims from all quarters of the globe, and secretly preferred some modest piece in the oblivion of a corner. It is not that I would oppose my opinion to that of the world, but simply express it without concealment, but without bigotry; and until time shall have quickened my taste, I shall be satisfied with acquiescing in the judgment of *virtù* without sharing its enthusiasm.

The first months of my novitiate in these matters, were months of disappointment. The subject appeared above me—but, however!!

There was no disappointment for the baron. He was overcome with rapture at every old fading fresco and cracked statue, from Poggibonsi to Storta; and unless time either matures his taste or extinguishes his sight before he gets through his second volume, he will dissolve and evaporate in ecstasies of rapture. The gallery at Florence has somewhat impaired his constitution. The Vatican will kill him.

But inanimate forms, even when traced by the divine genius of Raphael or Canova, are less interesting than the aspects of living nature, and I have sometimes forgotten Guido and Da Vinci, while watching the half-open mouth, the dilated eyes, and the forgotten mustaches of our friend, as the name of some of those immortal artists rolled out amid the sonorous Italian of the *cicerone*. Then as the tale was finished and his mind charged with name and date, his lips would close in a profound silence—awe and triumph in his face—reverence in his tread—with erect figure and folded arms, he would walk from point to point, viewing the stained and broken object of his wonder in every light and position, and ratifying by the decree of antiquity, not unfrequently upon the wrong form. While he recommended a foot one day to our especial admiration, the guide, with a gesture of indifference and scorn, mentioned that the admired member had been restored by a modern. Nothing but the disgust of an ugly prude at the power of beauty or admiration of men, can equal the contempt of these honest *ciceroni* for any thing that is not ancient. The baron was again annoyed by the stupidity of a priest, who was so busy bowing, courtesying, and crossing himself before the various wax figures, altars and holy relics of a cathedral, that

he pointed out a sad daub, as by one of the *Caracci*, instead of the adjacent painting. The young *connoisseur*, as usual, was at once struck mute with astonishment and delight, and shook his head knowingly, when one of our companions suggested a preference for the next and true picture. When the guide, observing his error, corrected it, the baron twisted his mustache with his thumb and finger, and without attempting retreat or apology, shifted his transferable worship to the right shrine.

I flatter myself that my own merits, though of a less obvious nature than his own, had conciliated his respectful regard, but he could not conceal a certain contempt for me on hearing of my disappointment on my first glance at the Venus. My confession was not made without a modest acknowledgment of my incapacity as a critic and a metaphysical analysis of the causes, etc.; but he would hear nothing of incapacity or metaphysics. He said to see that picture of the divine image, he would willingly take a voyage across the globe. He would "depense" all his fortune. He had paid his adorations to it as soon as he reached Florence. He had hastened up the steps of the gallery—rushed into the corridor and flown to the Tribune; but, when he beheld the Divinity—he started—he stopped—he was struck mute and motionless with astonishment and rapture—his arms fell nerveless—a cold tremour crept over his body—his eyes were filled with tears—and—

Here he looked up with the expression of one whose feelings have quite gone beyond the feeble eloquence of superlatives.

"Well, but," said I, "it is curious that I should never have met you. For we have both been some months in Florence, and I have spent a portion of nearly every day either in the Uffizi or Pitti." He twisted his mustache again at this, and said he had staid away on account of the cold.

The last day of our journey, as we approached a hill, from the summit of which could be seen the eternal city, the *vetturino* pointed it out, and stopped his horses, and we mounted the elevation. For some moments I forgot the baron in my own reveries and observations, but, on turning my head, I caught a glance at his figure; his arms folded theatrically on his bosom, and a frown of stupendous thought upon his brow, over which his hat, either in the hurry of accident or the vehemence of emotion, had been drawn unusually low. He stood awhile unconscious of my presence—his dilated eyes fixed on the distance, evidently abandoned to a thousand exciting and tumultuous associations. What a picture he would have made! At length with three strides forward, pulling his hat an inch farther down, his eyes still staring at the dome of *San Pietro*—a black spot on the horizon, he re-arranged his folded arms, and in a sonorous voice, exclaimed,

"Voilà donc Rome!"

"That look—that emphasis—that hat!!"

What an unsentimental wretch I am!

Before taking leave of the baron, I must state that his exuberance of manner covered much intrinsic sense and solid information and a heart full to overflowing of warm affections and manly honour. There were about him, too, shoots of thought and eloquence, which implied a soil fertile for the growth of talents. He was clearly in love with the signora, but only to the usual depth of young men, who forget while they win and enjoy the fascinating smiles of innocence and beauty, that love sinks deep into a woman's heart, and lingers there long, while to their lowlier senses it is inhaled and forgotten like the passing fragrance of a flower.

The signora grew pensive as we entered the city; a *lasciar passare* fortunately exempted us from all the annoyance of the *doggana*. At the *Porta del Popolo*, a plain, neat carriage, with an elderly gentleman and a blooming young girl, drove up for the now sad and silent signora, who, with a sigh and a smile, paid us a parting salutation. The baron was in one of his romantick studies, and was so busy stretching and almost breaking his neck to distinguish the portion of the old wall supposed to contain the ashes of Nero, that he actually let her depart without a farewell. He called on us frequently in Rome, and accompanied us in many of our excursions to the villas and amid the ruins. The day before we left the city we had taken a farewell stroll in the Vatican, where we met him with his note-book and pencil, employed in his great project of instructing the world; bade him good-by, with sincere regret; in the cabinet containing the Apollo he seemed quite affected; but, on looking back a moment after, I beheld him with bent brow and folded arms, and his hat drawn over his eyes, perusing the marble divinity, in the meditative attitude of Napoleon.

On our way back to Florence we had different company. They were a plain English couple, returning, outraged, indignant and disgusted from a tour to Naples. With all their stanch English prejudices and preferences, hardened tenfold—a world of little bronzes, Roman mosaics, camei intaglii and alabaster, and the most beautiful little dog you ever saw. While listening to their unqualified denunciations against Italy and the Italians, my conscience smote me lest in these papers I had myself been guilty of a dislike as hasty and tirades as ridiculous. I hold it, however, a duty to speak out frankly. Our minds were crossed with some lurking prejudices against our good friends, whose manner and conversation did not at first strike us favourably, but we had not made many invidious comparisons, before the amusement to be obviously derived from them furnished a pleasant offset, and by the time we had reached Florence, what with our own exuberant health and spirits, their perpetual kindness to us, and wranglings with each other, the surprising splendour of the scenery by this "Perugia Route," and the seducing and heavenly brightness of the climate, already melting into the golden glory of spring; our fears had passed away, and we found ourselves insensibly interested in them, dog and all. We shall not forget the waggish but profound submission of the husband, the grace and intelligence of the dog, and the wife's "John, good gracious, how can you be such a fool!!"